THE JESTER.
EVERY SATURDAY.

THE WORLD-WIDE WANDERINGS OF BASIL & BERT.

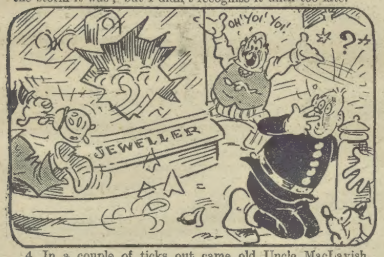
Our Lads take a trip that lands them back in the days of King Alfred. You must see this!

No. 1,464. THE COMICAL CAPERS OF CONSTABLE CUDDLECOOK! NOVEMBER 30, 1929.

1. Dear Mr. Editor, My Knobby Old Knut,—There was such a peaceful air on my beat the other morn that I ought to have come over suspicious. Yes, that peaceful calm before the storm it was; but I didn't recognise it until too late.

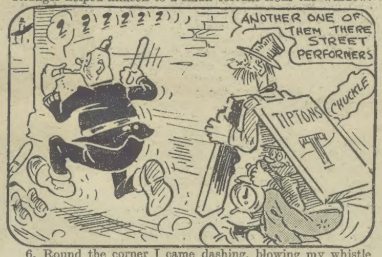
2. Then up rushed a stranger to me where I stood outside the shop owned by Uncle MacLavish, and in a startled voice he bade me glance across the road. Somewhat taken back I obeyed, and then this artful lad got busy with a brick.

3. There was confusion in a moment. Before I could turn round to see what the crash meant I received a kick in the after part that sent me face first to catch the post. And the stranger helped himself to a small fortune from the window.

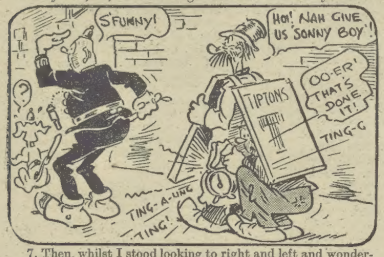


4. In a couple of ticks out came old Uncle MacLavish, wailing a Scotch lament. "My tiamonds!" he sobbed. "My jewels! There vos you; here vos I; dere vos der sun up in der sky—oh, do, do something!" Then I came to my senses!

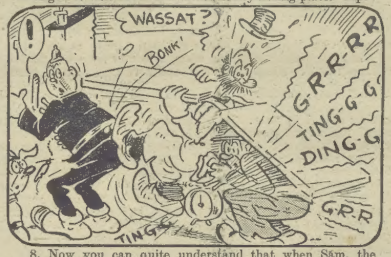
5. Yes, I realised everything, sir, and drawing my truncheon I set off after that smash-and-grabber. Now, that laddie must have got the wind up, for though I didn't know it he arranged to take cover in a rather nobby hiding-place. Mps!



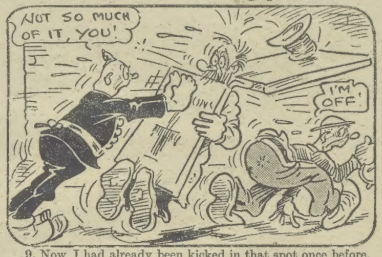
6. Round the corner I came dashing, blowing my whistle for aid and keeping a stric eye on the look-out for the bad lad. He was missing! I hadn't seen what you can see and I didn't know he'd taken board and lodging near at hand.



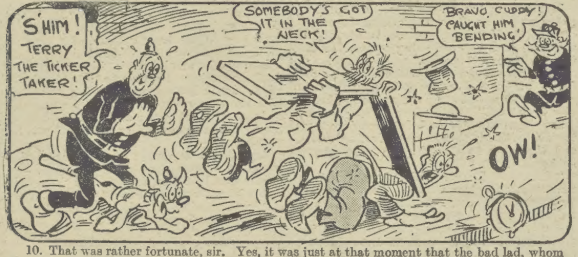
7. Then, whilst I stood looking to right and left and wondering where my man had disappeared to, things began to happen. Among the jewels was one of the famous MacLavish alarm clocks, and it decided it was time to add to the excitement.



8. Now, you can quite understand that when Sam, the sandwichman, heard a bell ring so near him he got all hot and bothered. Yes, he chased around himself to see what was what, and in doing so planted his foot on my anatomy.



9. Now, I had already been kicked in that spot once before, and I didn't like being reminded of it. Moreover, I was feeling peevish at the way I'd missed the bad lad. I'm afraid I had an attack of naughty temper. Yes, I gave Sam such a push.



10. That was rather fortunate, sir. Yes, it was just at that moment that the bad lad, whom I now recognised as Terry, the ticker-taker, had decided to make himself scarce. Sam fell back as I pushed him, and the bad lad got it in the neck with a vengeance. And to complete the adventure happily, up rolled my old Inspector, Flipflap, just in time to give me a cheer.

11. I am happy to say that when we trotted Terry round to old uncle's place and returned the stolen ticker and things to him, the old lad was true to the traditions of his race. Yes! Uncle MacLavish was lavish with his presents and insisted on decorating me with diamonds and things as a reward for my smartness. I deserved it!—Yours, CONSTABLE CUDDLECOOK.

"JUST WE THREE"

You will find laughter and tears in this human story of the adventures of two homeless brothers and their girl chum. START IT TO-DAY!

Escape and a Chase.

"WHAT is the matter? Why has the grocer fetched a policeman?"

That was the question which leapt to Joe Blake's mind as he peered with startled eyes into the shop.

Joe, with his chum Jess, and his little brother Jimmy, were living at the house, not far away, of a kind but rather mysterious old man named Flannagan, and Mr. Flannagan had sent Joe out with a new pound note to buy a pound of tea.

It seemed a simple enough errand, yet this queer thing had happened. Telling Joe to wait in the parlour, the grocer had gone out quickly, returning later with the burly policeman, who seemed, now, almost to fill the little shop.

And the grocer, himself, had shut and bolted the shop door as if to prevent anyone from getting in or out.

"You're sure it's a bad one," Joe heard the constable mutter.

"Positive," said Mr. Piper. "Exactly the same as one I took last week."

"What sort of boy is he?" the policeman grunted.

"Not very tall," said the grocer, "but sturdy—and with nice bright eyes. You wouldn't think he was dishonest."

"H'm! Some of the worst of 'em look all right," the policeman grunted, as he lifted the counter-flap.

And then a sudden fear came to Joe, and he sprang back, looking about him anxiously for some way of escape. He was going to be locked-up; the policeman had been fetched for him!

He had done nothing wrong, not that he knew. He had nothing to be afraid of. But the sight of the policeman's face sent a shiver through him. He had visions of being led away to the police station—put in prison perhaps. And Jess and little Jimmy would not know.

He looked about despairingly. There was no other door. The window was the only other way—opening out on to the street.

He could see the figure of Mr. Piper peering about on the floor below the till, as if he was searching for something. Joe knew what he was looking for—the pound note. The note in his hand which Mr. Flannagan had given him to change.

With a gasp Joe thrust it into his pocket and leant on to a chair, reaching up and wrenching at the window-catch. It was stiff, but with an effort he forced it back.

Now to raise the window! He groaned as the window refused to budge when he tugged at it. The chair wobbled under him, and he set his teeth for a desperate effort.

His heart jumped with hope as he felt it give; there was a creak. It was opening—opening! He raised it six inches, and paused, panting, dreading that any moment the policeman might burst in and grab him. One more effort—— Now!

With a clatter the window shot up with such force that the chair and Joe came down with a crash on the floor. In the same moment the shop door hurled open.

"Quick!" cried a hoarse voice. "He's bolting! Hi, there!"

With a desperate plunge Joe dived head-first through the window.

He felt a strong hand grab his ankle.

"Come here!"

With a fierce kick he freed himself and came down on his hands, rolling over.

"He's gone! The shop door, quick!" rasped the grocer.

Leaping to his feet Joe dashed across the road and down the pavement. Turning, he saw the figure of the constable leap out of the shop and plunge after him heavily. A police whistle struck terror into Joe's heart as he ran.

"Stop thief! Stop him!" roared voices behind.

A man stopped and tried to bar his way, but Joe swerved into the road. Another man grabbed at him, but he dodged and tore himself free.

His cheeks blanched, Joe turned as he ran and shot a hunted look over his shoulder. It seemed now that not one but dozens were after him, shouting and waving. The policeman was ahead of them—nearly on him.

In despair Joe swerved and dogged under the body of a horse which was harnessed to a van near by, leaping up a flight of steps into a big warehouse where men were loading cases on to trollies. They paused to stare in amazement as they saw a boy fly across the floor, leaping cases as he went.

"Hi, there, Spring-heel Jack!" one of them shouted. "What's the game?"

There was no door at the other end, only a staircase, up which Jack fled panting. It brought him to an opening in the warehouse wall, where cases were hauled up on a crane, the rope of which dangled a yard beyond the extended flap.

Joe paused, panting, peering down into the narrow alley below; but he paused only for a moment. The next instant two carters below were amazed to see a boy hurtled out and shin recklessly down the crane rope. He dropped on to the floor of the van, within a yard of them. One of them grunted in astonishment.

"Here, mate, are you trying to kill yourself?" he growled. "What the——"

He stopped short, for Joe was gone in a swift leap into the road. A car approached swiftly and, darting after it, Joe raised what was left of his strength to leap up and hang on to the carrier. A policeman and a man in a grocer's apron appeared on the flap of the high hatch over their heads.

They were peering in at Joe in a scared way and whispering together anxiously.

"Something's gone wrong. He's made a mess of it!" whispered Mr. Slim. "Quick! Go in and see what it is."

Mr. Flannagan paused, waiting for the scared look to go from his face and for the rather oily smile which the "Three" knew so well to come in its place.

He entered with his shuffling walk, rubbing his hands and grinning.

"You're back, then, Joe!" he said. "There's a good boy! Have you brought the tea? Why, bless my soul, you're out of breath, my son! What have you been running like that for?"

In a breathless way Joe described all that had happened and how he had only escaped arrest by a desperate flight from the grocer's. A flicker of fear and irritation appeared for a minute in Mr. Flannagan's small eyes, which he tried to conceal, while outside the door Mr. Slim went very pale as he listened.

"Did you leave the money behind, then?" Mr. Flannagan asked.

"No," said Joe, drawing it from his pocket. "I—I brought it. Is—is it a good one, Mr. Flannagan?"

"A good one? Of course it is!" snapped the old man, snatching it from him with obvious relief. "Why do you ask such silly questions?"

"The grocer seemed to think it was bad," said Joe. "That was why he——"

"Tut, tut! Nothing of the sort! How could he?" muttered Mr. Flannagan, putting it away carefully in his case. "He mistook you for some boy the police are after. That's the truth of it, I expect." He smiled and became his usual oily self again. "Poor boy! It gave you a fright, I expect. You ought to have stopped and told them who you were. But, there, perhaps it was best that you ran away. It saved a lot of trouble."

Turning, Joe saw the figure of the constable leap out of the shop and plunge after him. A police whistle struck terror into his heart as he ran. "Stop thief! Stop him!" roared voices behind him.

"Hi! Stop thief!" they panted. "Stop him!"

But this time they called in vain. In a flash Joe was round the corner and out of sight. Twenty minutes later, after a hurried flight along a maze of side streets, he was back at the house, leaning against the porch, so overcome that he had barely the strength left to ring the bell.

Jess, his girl chum, opened the door, and turned pale as he staggered in and almost fell. She paled with alarm as he stumbled through into the dining-room and sank, exhausted into a chair. Little Jimmy, his young brother, came forward with concern in his round eyes.

"Joe—what's the matter, Joe? What are you breathing like that for?" he asked.

Joe didn't answer; he couldn't. Jimmy repeated the question. At the end of a minute Joe looked up and forced a smile. He didn't want to frighten the little fellow.

"It's all right, Jimmy," he assured him. "I—I've just been having a sprint."

"What's a sprint?" asked Jimmy, who looked as if he thought it might be something to drink, like peppermint, that caught in your throat and made you breathe hard. "What's a sprint, Joe?" he repeated.

"A spurt," explained Joe, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

Little Jimmy looked at him eagerly, for Joe never had anything which he didn't share.

"Have you brought me one, Joe?" he asked. "I'd like a squirt."

Outside the half-open door Mr Flannagan had appeared silently with Mr. Slim, the man who had told Joe he was a detective.

"It did and all!" muttered Mr. Slim to himself behind the door. And his look of anxiety remained when Mr. Flannagan joined him a few minutes later. They stood talking in earnest whispers for some time.

"It won't be safe to let him out again just yet," muttered Mr. Slim. "You'd better keep him close, Flannagan."

"Leave it to me!" muttered Mr. Flannagan, and shuffled down the dark passage out of sight.

Jimmy Receives a Lesson.

IN the secret garage at the back of the house the three youngsters were very busy.

Jess had a broom, Joe, with a pail of water and a brush, was washing down the car. Little Jimmy, unnoticed, had borrowed a sponge and was polishing up one of the tyres with metal polish.

"Mr. Flannagan says you're not to go out for a few days, Joe," said Jess. "He says you've had a bad fright and must have a nice long rest."

Joe frowned. He had had ample opportunity to think things over that morning, and the more he thought the more uneasy he became.

"The more I see of this place, Jess," he muttered, "the less I like it. And that old man, too. I don't trust him. He's a twister!"

He jabbed the brush viciously into the pail, and then a voice came from outside, calling:

"Jimmy!" It was Mr. Flannagan's voice. "Where are you, my dear? I want you! Come and help granddad!"

Little Jimmy put down the sponge reluctantly and went out, and Mr. Flannagan took him by the hand, leading him along stairs and passages to a room where, a few minutes before, he had been in close conference with Mr. Slim and several others. He beamed on Jimmy as he closed the door, and gave him a sweet from a tin.

"Now, Jimmy," he said, "your big brother and Jess are learning to be useful, and I want you to be useful, too. Do you know how to oil a bolt?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Then I'll show you," Mr. Flannagan said, with a smile.

Taking a small oilcan from his pocket, he showed Jimmy how to squeeze it and shoot the oil over the bolt of the door so that it would slip up and down easily and without noise. Then he gave it to Jimmy and let him practise on some other bolts on the other doors.

"That's fine!" he said. "Bolts get nasty and rusty if they aren't oiled. Have you ever tried climbing through fanlights?"

Again Jimmy shook his head, and again Mr. Flannagan smiled.

"It's quite easy," he said, "and jolly good fun. And it's useful, too," he added, "if you happen to go out and forget to take the key with you. Let's try that fanlight up there. I just bunk you up and help you through, then you hang on and drop down nice and quietly and open the door for me."

It was a bit awkward at first, but Jimmy had plenty of pluck, and soon got used to it. After a few times he was able to wriggle through ever so quickly and drop down with hardly any noise at all. Mr. Flannagan was delighted.

"That's fine!" he said, putting some sweets into Jimmy's hand. "I used to be able to do it when I was young, but I'm too big now."

Jimmy looked over contentedly, munching his toffee.

"Will you let me see you twisting one day?" he asked.

"Twisting?" exclaimed Mr. Flannagan. "What do you mean, my son?"

"Joe says you're a twister. I heard him tell Jess. What do you twist, Mr. Flannel-feet?" Jimmy asked.

Mr. Flannagan turned to hide a scowl.

"Joe shouldn't tell you what isn't true," he said sharply. Then he turned, resuming his smile with an effort. "Now, listen, Jimmy. How would you like granddad to take you to a nice party to-night?"

"What kind of a party is it, Mr. Flannagan?" Jimmy asked anxiously. "Is it a tea-party?"

Mr. Flannagan smiled his oily smile.

"No!" he said. "It's not exactly a tea-party, Jimmy, but it will be fine."

Jimmy's eyes brightened.

"Where is it?" he asked

"At a nice house not very far away. And you shall have some nice cake and all sorts of things. Would you like it?"

Jimmy nodded eagerly.

"Very well, you shall come. But it's a secret, remember! You mustn't tell anyone; not even Joe and Jess. You must keep it all to yourself, and then perhaps you can bring them home some cake as a nice surprise."

It was a secret which Jimmy found it hard to keep, especially when he and Joe and Jess sat round the fire that night. He felt almost glad when Mr. Flannagan came in and said he was not to sleep with Joe that night, but in the bed-room below, because Jimmy often lay awake and asked all sorts of questions.

"Jimmy's getting a big boy now," Mr. Flannagan said, "and deserves a nice little bed-room all to himself."

Later, however, Jimmy was sorry, for he realised that it would be lonely there with a room to himself, and he hugged Joe wistfully as he kissed him good-night. Joe, too, felt strange without him, and lay full of uneasy thoughts for an hour or more before he dropped asleep.

When Joe woke up it was very dark and silent, and the wind sighed in rather an eerie way in the trees outside. He thought of little Jimmy alone in the bed-room below, and wondered if the wind had awakened him; he was so scared of the wind. For a few moments he lay, conscious of a vague uneasiness. At last he rose and stole silently down the stairs into the little room. It was dark, and he groped for matches.

And then a cry came from the room, followed by swift steps on the staircase.

The sound of knocking on her door woke Jess with a start, and she sat up, trembling.

"Jess! Quickly!" It was Joe's voice, so hoarse and scared that her heart beat frantically. "Jess! Jimmy's disappeared! They—they've taken him away!"

(Has the gang taken little Jimmy to assist them in some wicked scheme? Don't miss next Saturday's thrilling instalment. Order your copy of the JESTER to-day.)

30-11-29

SON OF A GUN-MAN

A tale of a young Western cowboy who, in spite of his dying outlaw father's advice, is driven to take the six-gun trail against a notorious rustling rancher. You can START TO-DAY!

Three rapid strides brought Sonny face to face with the man who had shot down his father. "Burk," he snapped, "I saw you kill my dad! I watched you shoot down my best friend, John Russell, and that day I swore that if ever you crossed my trail I'd——" He paused, wrath almost choking him.

Burk Again!

"KEEP away from six-guns!"

The last words of his shot and dying outlaw father came to Sonny Harding now as the three men closed in on him.

The two men on each side of him were deputies. The man who had crossed the road was a full-blown sheriff—and, strangely enough, seemed not to know the two who had stopped him.

"Yeah!" said the man on his right. "We've watched for you, Harding. You're wanted for stealing a horse from the J. R. Ranch, and, likewise, killing poor old John Russell!"

"And as I told you," cut in the man on the left, "the charges are set up by Bulls-eye Burk. Howdo, sheriff? You wanting this gent, too?"

The sheriff eyed all three suspiciously; then he fixed his gaze on Sonny, and took in every detail of his appearance.

"You're Harding," he said. "I'm wanting you for horse-stealing and murder! Information has been laid by Mr. Burk, and——"

"Say, sheriff," cut in one of the deputies, "we're from Rocky Creek. We've trailed this gent here, and guess we'll take him back. No need for you to bother. We'll see to it that he gets back to the Creek—and Burk. It's all O.K.!"

"It may be all O.K. to you!" snapped the sheriff. "This Harding fellow's on my territory, and I'm going to arrest him. You coming quietly, Harding? Or have I got to draw a gun on you and take you by force?"

The gun-trail! They were bent on driving him to it. Inwardly, Sonny swore that he would never go to gaol on such trumped-up charges as these—charges invented by Bulls-eye Burk, the man who had killed Sonny's father, and had sworn to wipe out the entire Harding race!

So those masked riders who had shot down old John Russell must have recognised him, after all, and warned Burk about him. Burk, eager to get his talons on the son of the man he hated, had formulated these charges against the boy, and was eager to see him hustled to gaol—and, more than likely, to the rope!

"Well, we don't want to quarrel with you, sheriff," said one of the deputies, backing through the door into the bar. "Take your man, if you must. Here! Have a drink on me before you go."

He returned to the doorway with a full glass of potent spirit, and held it out towards the sheriff.

That worthy pushed him away.

"Are you coming, Harding?" he snapped; and he reached a hand forward to unbuckle Sonny's gunbelt.

The outlaw's son backed away, pale and tight-lipped. He meant to fight; he would not go to gaol on such charges—especially to a gaol which he knew would be controlled by Bullseye Burk.

There would be but one end to him once he was in Burk's power—death! And an ignoble death, too, if Burk could contrive it! Better by far to settle everything now.

Like lightning, his hands went down to the gun-butts. But a moment later a revolver was thrust into his ribs. One of the deputies stepped forward, gun in hand.

"Take it easy!" he snapped. "No good fighting the law, Harding. There're three of us here!"

Once more the sheriff leaned forward to unbuckle the gun-belt that circled Sonny's waist.

Even as he did so, he uttered a yell of rage and pain.

The second deputy had suddenly flung the full glass of spirit straight into his eyes; the first man followed this up with a crashing blow dealt at the sheriff's head with the barrel of his gun.

Sonny watched the scene in amazement. The sheriff went down with a thud, unconscious, and the two deputies suddenly snatched off their stars and thrust them deep into their pockets.

"Harding," said one of them, "meet Slim Hankins here and Buck Malloy—the last being myself. We're sorry to have butted in on a private deal; but, for reasons of our own, me and Slim didn't want Burk railroading you to gaol on the charges made against you. Me and Slim got to hear about them charges, and came after you to warn you to steer clear of sheriffs for a while. We realised we were a mite too late when we saw the sheriff himself coming up-street. From that moment me and Slim became deputies—meaning to try and arrest you, get you out of town, and let you go. I guess we just had to smash up that sheriff before you let daylight into him. Now, maybe, you'll come to some quiet place with us and let us let you in on some of our plans?"

Sonny Harding nodded a little dully. He sensed that the outlaw trail was opening up before him now. These two men who had helped him—Slim Hankins and Buck Malloy—must be outlaws. They knew of his father's reputation, and figured that Sonny must inevitably follow Glyn Harding's lead. So they had helped him that he might join them, and help them in their outlaw schemes.

"Let's just have a little drink to celebrate the flooring of the sheriff," said Slim, with a glance at the prone figure on the floor. "He sure looks right handsome—the way I like to see sheriffs of that breed. I——"

He paused and gazed suddenly at Sonny. The boy was standing stiff and watchful, his eyes focused on the doorway.

A man stood framed in the sunlight—a tall, powerfully-built man—with a cluster of cowboys edging up close behind him.

It was Bullseye Burk himself, his keen dark eyes flashing right and left around the bar.

Sonny moved away from the two men who had come to his aid. His quarrel with Burk was his own. There was no need to drag Slim and Buck into it—even if they showed willingness to fight against such a powerful enemy as Bullseye Burk.

He stood in the centre of the saloon now, all alone. He looked very much like his dead outlaw father now—the way Glyn Harding had stood on the fatal night when Burk had shot him down.

Slim and Buck calmly finished their drink, as if unconscious of the tenseness of the moment.

Burk's eyes flickered coldly to the still form of the sheriff lying upon the floor. He looked silently at Slim and Buck, as if trying to determine who had delivered the blow. Then he stepped farther into the room, and beckoned his own men to follow him.

He walked around as if he owned the place—which, if the truth was known, he actually did.

Then suddenly he stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his leather waistcoat and looked straight at Sonny.

"Seems like the sheriff didn't finish his job," he drawled. "I came along just to see if he needed any help. You see, gents, I'm interested in law and order, and my riders are always ready to lend a sheriff a hand. Now, maybe the prisoner will come quietly, in which case——"

Sonny did not wait for him to finish. Three rapid strides brought him face to face with the man who had shot down his father.

"Burk," he snapped, "I saw you kill my dad! I watched you shoot down my best friend, John Russell, and that day I swore that if ever you crossed my trail I'd——"

He paused, wrath almost choking him. Burk looked at him coldly.

"You boys heard him threaten me!" he said, turning quietly to his men. "You heard him say I killed his father. I shot down an outlaw—and I was a properly sworn-in deputy at the time. As for the killing of Russell—well, we know he did that job himself. It's no use him trying to shift the blame. Seems like he's talking pretty big, too. That night your father was shot I seem to remember you running away pretty smart-like! Talking rather high and mighty for a coward, ain't you, Harding?"

Burk's game was obvious. With half a dozen of his own men around him, he could taunt the boy to his heart's content, knowing full well that the slightest movement towards Sonny's guns would be the signal for his own gunmen to leap in and protect him.

But Sonny did not go for his guns—immediately. Instead, his own hand cracked across the pale, taunting face of his enemy like a whip-lash.

Then, and only then, did he sink back into the true gunman's crouch, his hands hovering towards the guns at his side. Gone was his father's influence; gone was all thought of holding to that last admonition.

All that he wanted to do was to avenge his father; to avenge John Russell and to defend himself to the very death from these men who would hound him to gaol!

The Prisoner.

FOR one tense moment it seemed that Burk would go for his guns. He was no coward in that sense; though he was safe in the knowledge that he had men to back him up.

But suddenly Buck Malloy stepped forward, and a gun was once more thrust into the young cowboy's ribs. Mysteriously Malloy had got his deputy's star again.

"There'll be no gun-play," he said grimly. "Leave him to me, Mr. Burk. I'll take him along to gaol right away!"

"Who are you?" said Burk wonderingly. "Seem like a stranger to me. You're a deputy, too. Where from?"

"Me, I come from the next State, Mr. Burk," said Malloy, glibly enough. "I was present when the sheriff got his, and guessed there'd be trouble. Understand this gent is a horse-thief and a killer. Right! I'll help you get him into gaol!"

"That goes with me!" said Burk, with a smile. "Bring him along right now, stranger! Some of you boys look after the sheriff. Ah, and give me the gaol keys! We'll lock Harding up until we can get him back to Rocky Creek for the trial! This way!"

Malloy urged his prisoner down the main street. Slim Hankins had disappeared, and Sonny's thoughts were bitter against these two men whom he had been half inclined to trust.

They reached the stout walls of the little gaol in a few moments, and Sonny was hustled through the sheriff's office towards the iron-barred cell in the rear.

Sonny felt himself grow cold as he watched Burk unlock and swing open the great iron door with the keys he had taken from the sheriff. Once inside those walls all would be lost. Even now he felt like making a break for it, of trying one last dash for freedom.

Then suddenly he felt Malloy push past him and in doing so cause him to jostle Burk into taking a step forward into the cell.

Burk made a grab for his arm involuntarily. Then Sonny felt Malloy's gun leave his back, saw the man leap forward suddenly. One violent push and Bullseye Burk sprawled downward on his face, his hands going for his guns even as he fell.

The door clanged shut with the ring of keys against the solid iron.

Staring incredibly, Sonny faced Malloy, who was grinning broadly.

"Got to move fast, kid," muttered Buck. "Quick! This way! Slim'll have the ponies out back by now. We fixed it while you was arguing with that guy!"

Then they were through the little door at the back of the shack, and Malloy thrust the young cowboy's gun-belt towards him.

"Get it on, Harding," he said. "Maybe we'll need it soon!"

Slim Hankins suddenly appeared out of the brush beyond the gaol. He waved his hand as a signal, and the pair made for him hurriedly.

Three ponies, ready saddled, stood behind Slim, and all three vaulted to the saddles. Straight across country they plunged at a gallop.

One of Burk's men, roused by shouts and shots coming from the gaol, came round the corner of the building. Slim saw the man go for his guns, and, turning in the saddle, he loosed a shot that ricochetted off the corner of the gaol and caused the would-be rescuer of Burk to double back to cover hastily.

Once more Sonny's heart leaped for joy and for gratitude to these strangers who had got him free at the very moment it seemed that all was lost.

He was ashamed of himself for the way he had misjudged Malloy when Buck had taken command of proceedings in the only way it would be possible for him to carry out the rest of the rescue.

They rode like the wind, with Malloy in the lead and Slim drawing up in the rear, with a watchful eye upon the gaol, now rapidly receding in the distance.

Even as they swung off the flat ground on to the first grade that led up to the hill trails, the shouts and thuds of hoofs came floating across to them, and they knew that Burk's men would soon be hot on their trail.

They came to the ford a mile or two from Rocky Creek, and Malloy made them wait in the middle of the stream whilst he raced across and made a set of tracks that led onwards past the river. Then, from a rock above the trail, Buck set his horse to jump back into the stream, and all three continued on with the current, thus leaving no tell-tale tracks.

Half a mile lower down they left the water and once more galloped across open country. Sonny realised that they were merely skirting Rocky Creek and were heading back right into the very midst of Burk's country.

On a ridge-top Malloy stopped and scanned the country with close-set eyes. He could see no sign of any followers.

"We've shook 'em off!" he said, as he returned to the other two and slowly rolled a cigarette. "Guess Burk and his men, law officers or otherwise, won't look for us here. Funny gent, this Burk. He figures that because a guy runs away from him once he's quit for good. Maybe he'll prove himself wrong one day. Well, you're safe for a little while, young Harding. What are you going to do? Leave us, or ride the gun-trail along of Slim and me?"

The gun-trail! He was hitting the gun-trail!

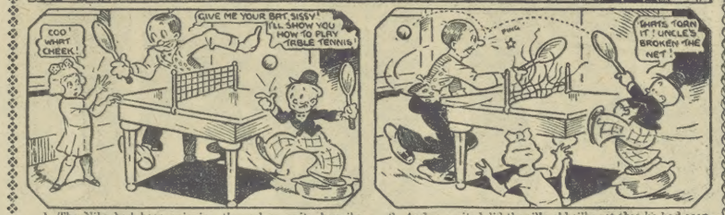
An outlaw already; with false charges hanging over his head, 'twas true, but an outlaw so long as Burk controlled the plains below.

"Keep away from six-guns!" His father's dying advice came back to him once more. Yet what could he do? Burk was forcing him to ride the gun-trail and to skulk in outlaw hide-outs. That being the case, what better pards could he find than Slim Hankins and Buck Malloy?

(Another long instalment of this thrilling Western yarn in next Saturday's JESTER.)

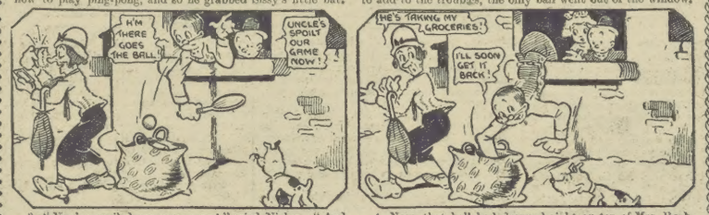
30-11-29

UNCLE SQUIBS AND HIS NAUGHTY NIBS



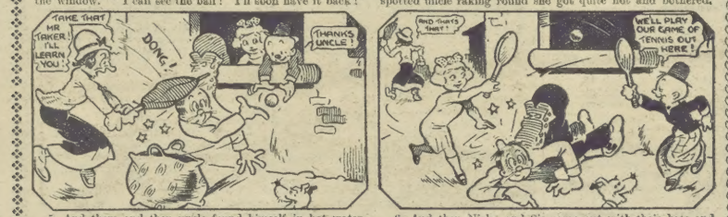
1. The Nibs had been enjoying themselves quite happily until Uncle Squibs butted in. Yes, he decided to show them how to play ping-pong, and so he grabbed Sissy's little bat.

2. And so excited did the silly old silly get that he had soon busted the net, and that ended the game for everyone. Just to add to the troubles, the only ball went out of the window.



3. "You've spoiled our game now!" cried Nicky. "And broken the net, too!" "Tut-tut!" said uncle, peering through the window. "I can see the ball! I'll soon have it back!"

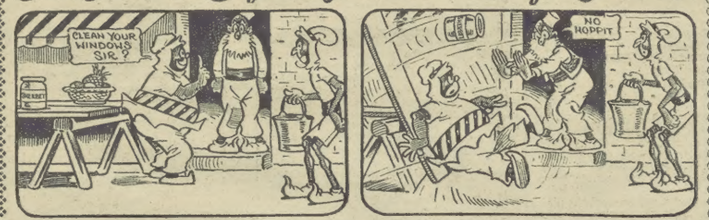
4. Now, that ball had dropped right on top of Mrs. Rockface's groceries in the shopping bag, and when the good dame spotted uncle raking round she got quite hot and bothered.



5. And there and then uncle found himself in hot water. Yes, right and left Mrs. Rockface set about the old lad with her brolly, and nunk quietly went off into a deep, deep sleep!

6. And then Nicky and Sis came out with their bats and had a nice quiet game while uncle slept. "Well!" said Nicky. "He spoiled our net. I hope he likes the 'net' result!"

Seezum & Squeezum, the Artful Arabs.



1. Seezum and Squeezum were so badly in need of a cooling drink that they actually had to descend to doing work. Yes, they set themselves up as window-cleaners and hurried over to old Ali Ben Beaver's shop and tried to fix up a small contract.

2. But Ali Ben didn't want his windows cleaned, and said so. Moreover, he was quite rude to the lads, too. Yes, he gave the fat Squeezum a push which upset his apple-cart—and likewise disturbed the goods displayed outside the shop!

3. But meanwhile Seezum had had his eye fixed upon a jar of sherbet that went up in the air as Squeezum fell. Right neatly did the long laddie field that jar. Yes, he caught it in the bucket of water he'd brought along for window-cleaning.

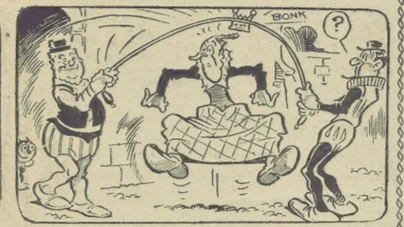
4. And so those lads had a nice long cooling drink without working for it after all! A few ticks later old Ali Ben Beaver discovered his loss and pulled half his beaver out as he realised how he had been done. Didn't those Arabs grin? Sure!

LIZZIE COMICAL AND HER COURTIERS

FRANCIS HAKE — WALTER RALLY

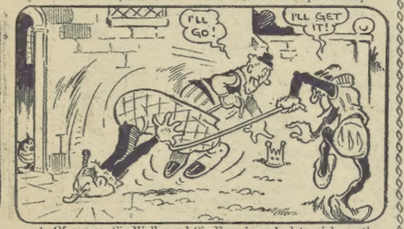
OUR LADS GIVE LIZZIE TOO MUCH ROPE AND HAVE TO SKIP!

1. Queenie felt full of beans one frosty morning, and so calling her knights, Sir Walter Rally and Sir Francis Hake, she skipped down to the cloisters to do her daily dozen exercises.

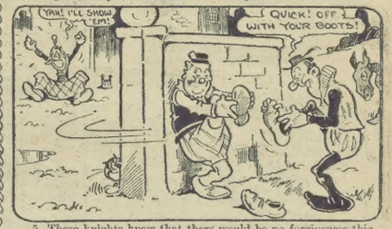


2. But the knights were a bit careless that day. Yes, so heartily did they swing the old rope that they knocked the queen's crown off, and it fell with a thud in the square. Mps!

3. Now, things like that usually annoy her royaltyness, but she took it quite mildly this time! "Ye clumsy knaves!" said she. "Bring back my crown before I crown ye both with a brick!"



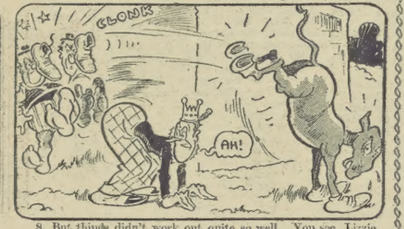
4. Of course, Sir Wally and Sir Francis rushed to pick up the royal dome-cover, and each forgot the rope which he still held. That caused more trub! Yes, Lizzie went down with a bonk!



5. Those knights knew that there would be no forgiveness this time, and the only thing to do was to bunk while Lizzie still lay dizzy. But they didn't run very far. No, only just a spot!

6. And then they took off their boots and hid in the royal dust-bin as Lizzie came dashing up. "Ah!" said the queen. "Their footmarks! Now indeed shall I follow them and give them beans!"

7. But you know as well as we do that those footprints weren't made by the knights. No! They'd placed their footwear on the court mule and let him do the necessary to lead Lizzie astray.



8. But things didn't work out quite so well. You see, Lizzie had stooped down to do some tracking, and the mule was rather anxious to get rid of the boots. So he kicked out right merrily.

9. Yes, the noble knights got their boots back rather suddenly—but as they arrived smack in the teeth, neither Wally nor Sir Francis was any too pleased about it. The royal lass, however, saw the funny side and let loose a guffaw of royal laughter. "Upon my sole!" said she. "Revenge is sweet, and I have got something to smile at to boot!" Then she hied to the hospital. 30-11-29

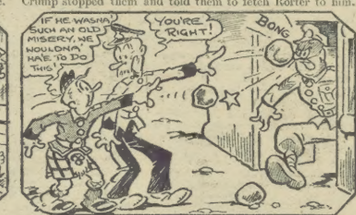
SANDY AND DUSTY THE REGIMENTAL RASCALS

GLOOM!
NO! YOU CAN'T HAVE A PASS! HOP IT! IF YOU WORRY ME AGAIN I'LL BIFF YOU!
NOTICE TROOPS MUST NOT BE TROUBLED WITH TRIVIAL COMPLAINTS

1. When Sandy and Dusty told the sergeant-major that their pet canary had got the whooping cough old Rorter didn't think that was good enough excuse for handing out leave.

2. In fact, he was rude about it and warned the lads not to return to his office again or he'd biff them! And then Captain Crump stopped them and told them to fetch Rorter to him.

3. Now, those rascals were a bit worried. They didn't want a biff from Rorter, and yet the captain's orders had to be obeyed. Then Dusty had a bright idea and heaved stones at the door.



4. Now, Rorter thought it was those worries knocking at his office door again, and he came stalking out ready to do a bit of biffing! Dusty didn't see him at first and hurled another stone.

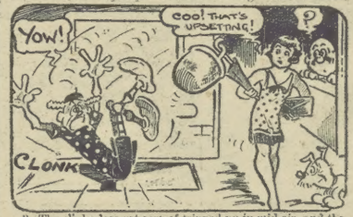
5. That caused it! Mps! Rorter stopped the stone with his face and then sat down quite speechless. Off dashed our lads to report to the captain that they couldn't get Rorter to speak.

6. And Captain Crump got quite annoyed with the way that the old sergeant-major sat there and stared without speaking or saluting. Sandy and Dusty just helped themselves to leave!

Jessie Joy, Just Like a Boy.

1. "Coo! What a chance!" cried old Sophie Slink, as she watched our joyful Jessie pop into a shop and leave her basket outside. "I'll jump on the basket and trample it to bits!" Meanwhile, the shopkeeper told Jessie to bring the basket inside.

2. "Someone might steal it," said he. "There's a funny lot of people about, you know!" "You're right," said Jessie. "Up she comes!" And with her brolly handle Jessie grabbed the basket just as Sophie was coming down on top of it!



3. The slinky lass got sort of tripped up in mid-air, and the next tick she went down on the old shop cellar-flap and disappeared. Meanwhile, Jessie finished her shopping and came tripping out with the grocer politely showing her the door.

4. But when the grocer spotted Sophie in his cellar he got cross! "There!" he said. "I said there were funny people hanging around! What are you doing in my cellar, girl?" And as Sophie couldn't answer he gave her a rare old hiding.

JERRY JONES AND UNCLE BONES

Don't miss this complete story if you enjoy a hearty laugh.

AS Jerry entered the little workshop at Slater's, the builder, where he was employed as assistant carpenter, he was surprised to find the place empty. Usually, the foreman, Mr. Mallett, was there working at his bench when Jerry arrived, and his unaccountable absence worried the boy.

"I do hope the old chap isn't queer, uncle," he murmured to his pet parrot, Uncle Bones, who was perched on his shoulder. "P'r'aps he's been held up in a traffic jam."

"I'd like a bit of bread-and-jam!" squawked the parrot. "Where is it? Cut me off a couple of slices!"

Before Jerry could reply, the door of the workshop swung open, and the foreman carpenter hurried in with a worried expression on his face.

"I've just heard some bad news, Jerry," he said, flinging his hat on a peg. "Mr. Slater's house was burgled last night."

"Burgled!" echoed Jerry. "Oh, I say, that's bad news. Did they get away with much stuff?"

"Well, enough to cause the guv'nor considerable anxiety," returned Mr. Mallett; "but apparently the burglar was disturbed, for he left a sackful of silver plate which he had packed in the dining-room. But he took away with him a beautiful pearl necklace which the guv'nor had just purchased for his daughter's twenty-first birthday, and he tells me that he paid two hundred pounds for it.

"My hat!" gasped Jerry. "What do the police say about it?"

The foreman carpenter shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, they say they've found a clue—a couple of finger-prints, or something—but I doubt if they'll ever catch the thief. But what's worrying the guv'nor more than anything is that his daughter doesn't know that he purchased this pearl necklace for her. He wanted to give her a surprise, and as it is her birthday to-morrow, there isn't time for him to get the necklace replaced by the insurance company. His only hope is that the police capture the thief to-day, and I think that's pretty hopeless, don't you?"

"It certainly seems like it," agreed Jerry.

For some minutes they discussed the burglary, and then Mr. Mallett turned to his file to see what work was to be done that day.

"Oh, here's a little job for you, Jerry," he said, looking up suddenly. "The landlord of Belamere Mansions has written to say that he wants us to fix up another coal-shed in the garden. You'd better run along there and see what materials will be required."

Jerry didn't wait for any further instructions. His landlady's pretty daughter, Ethel Bright, was employed at Belamere Mansions as a daily help, and she and Jerry were staunch chums. He would be sure of a cup of tea at Belamere Mansions, and Uncle Bones would get at least one knob of sugar.

Whistling his pet parrot to his shoulder, the boy set off at a swinging walk, and a few minutes later entered the tradesmen's entrance of Belamere Mansions.

As he pushed open the door he saw his chum busy cleaning the wide stone steps.

"Hallo! Do you want any hearthstone, lady?" squawked Uncle Bones.

The girl looked up with surprise, but as she saw Jerry standing beside her her pretty face broadened to a cheery smile.

"What are you doing round here?" she inquired. "Just watching me work?"

"At the moment, yes," laughed Jerry; "but I'm here on a job of work, too. I've got to measure up the new coal-shed for your landlord. Do you know where it's to go?"

"Yes; and, what's more, I know who it's for," returned the girl. "We've got a new tenant in No. 7 flat—an old lady named Mrs. Wiggles—and I don't think she and I are going to get on too well together. She only came in two days ago, and already she's grumbled at everything I've got to measure up the new coal-shed clean her flat now, and I dread the job. You'd laugh if you saw the old lady, Jerry," went on the girl, her pretty blue eyes twinkling. "She's got a deep voice like a man, and she keeps a stuffed parrot in a cage by the window. It's almost the image of Uncle Bones, and Mrs. Wiggles thinks the world of it. Yesterday, when she saw me dusting the cage, she pushed me roughly across the room, and told me never to touch it. 'I don't want you to go anywhere near my pretty Polly,' she said. And I'll take good care that I don't!" added Ethel, with a light laugh. "I shouldn't like to really upset Mrs. Wiggles; she's got a temper as fiery as a furnace when it's thoroughly roused—and it would be, I'm sure, if I touched her stuffed parrot."

"Well, I must say that this new tenant of yours seems to be a very interesting character, Ethel," said Jerry. "I'd like to meet her."

"Well, you will if you stay here for a couple of hours," smiled the girl. "She's out now doing a bit of shopping, I expect, although she pops in and out at all sorts of hours. Well, I'd better get up and clean her flat before she returns; and if you thank me very nicely, I'll make you a cup of tea when I come down."

"And what about a cup of 'you and me' for me?" croaked Uncle Bones. "I could do with a cup of cake and a slice of milk, I could, not half!"

As Ethel hurried into the mansions with a broad smile on her face, Jerry started to measure up the corner of the garden where the new coal-shed was to be fixed.

At the end of half an hour he had completed his task, and was just replacing his ruler in his pocket when Ethel came hurrying down the garden towards him.

One glance at his chum's face told him that she had suffered some sudden shock, and as he strode to meet her he noticed that she was carrying a parrot in her arms.

"Oh, Jerry, something awful has happened!" gasped Ethel suddenly. "I have busted Mrs. Wiggles' stuffed parrot. There will be a terrible row when she comes back. I dare not face her."

"Now, don't worry, Ethel," said Jerry, patting his chum comfortingly on the shoulder. "Accidents will happen, you know, and I'm sure that Mrs. Wiggles will realise that you didn't damage the bird wilfully. May I have a look at it? Perhaps I can mend it for you?"

"I don't think so, Jerry," replied Ethel, and there were tears in her eyes as she spoke. "You see I slipped on the polished floor, and in trying to save myself falling I knocked down the cage. Curiously enough the cage is not a bit damaged, but the head has come clean off the parrot. I'm afraid you cannot replace it without showing that it has been broken."

"Go on!" grinned Jerry. "You don't know what you can do until you try. Let's have a look at the parrot."

Ethel handed over the stuffed bird without a word, and watched Jerry's face closely as he studied the parrot from all angles.

"I think I can manage it," he said at length, but I'm afraid it will take me a good hour. Are you expecting Mrs. Wiggles back shortly?"

Ethel sighed deeply.

"Any moment now," she said despairingly.

"H'm, that's awkward," grunted Jerry thoughtfully. Then suddenly his face brightened, and he gripped his chum by the arm. "I've got an idea, Ethel, and I think it should work out all right," he went on hurriedly. "You say yourself that this stuffed bird is very much like Uncle Bones. Well, I suggest that we get uncle to take Polly's place in the cage, in case Mrs. Wiggles returns before I've finished the job, and if she doesn't—well, everything in the garden will be lovely. Now what do you think of my suggestion?"

"It sounds an excellent one," replied the girl after a moment's thought, "but are you sure that uncle will act like a stuffed bird—I mean remain perfectly still and quiet."

"He will if I tell him to do so," said Jerry, "but we'll have to take that risk. Come on, don't let's waste any more time, I want to get this parrot fixed up before old mother Wiggles turns up."

With Uncle Bones perched on his shoulder, and the stuffed parrot tucked under his arm Jerry followed Ethel up to Mrs. Wiggles' flat.

The cage which the stuffed bird had occupied was quite a large one, and the boy had no difficulty in getting Uncle Bones to enter it.

"Now look here, uncle," said Jerry, wagging his forefinger reprovingly at his pet, "I want you to remain perfectly still in the cage, and you mustn't say a word—not even if you are spoken to! Do you understand?"

"Not 'alf, mate!" croaked the wily old bird. "I shan't say a word until I speak. I'm going to have a good time, I don't think."

"You'll have four knobs of sugar, if you don't give the game away to Mrs. Wiggles," put in Ethel.

"Mrs. Giggles!" shouted Uncle Bones. "What a funny name!"

"Her name is Wiggles, not Giggles," said Jerry firmly. "Now don't say another word until I tell you to speak."

He turned away to leave the flat, but as he walked towards the door he heard somebody ascending the stairs outside, and he glanced swiftly at Ethel.

"Who's that?" he asked sharply.

The girl shook her head doubtfully.

"It must be Mrs. Wiggles, Jerry," she replied. "Oh, dear, whatever are we going to do now? You can't possibly get out of this flat without her seeing you. You must hide—quick! Here, get into this cupboard."

As she spoke she swung open a wide cupboard door, and Jerry darted inside, still clutching the stuffed parrot under his arm.

Ethel closed the door, leaving him in utter darkness, and next moment he heard Mrs. Wiggles enter the flat and heard her deep, rasping voice angrily questioning his chum.

"What! Are you still here, you lazy good-for-nothing," stormed Mrs. Wiggles. "I suppose you've been sitting down reading a book instead of getting on with your work. I'll have to report you to the landlord. I can't have you working about the flat all day. Now, hurry up and clean those brass candlesticks and get out."

Wondering what such a sour-voiced woman could look like Jerry silently eased open the cupboard door, and peeped out.

Mrs. Wiggles had her back to him, but Jerry saw a short, stout figure dressed in a cheap black fur coat, and a little poke bonnet which seemed to be perched on top of a woman's head. Then as she moved slightly to one side to get a better view of the old lady something fell at his feet with a dull thud.

For a moment Jerry's heart went thumping up in his throat with nervous excitement. He wondered if Mrs. Wiggles had heard the noise, and he stood staring hard at her through the narrow crack in the door, scarcely daring to breathe.

Apparently Mrs. Wiggles was hard of hearing for she made no move towards the cupboard, and Jerry heaved a sigh of relief as she nobbled across the room to the sideboard where Ethel was busy polishing the brass candlesticks.

It was not until then that Jerry stooped to discover what it was that had fallen at his feet from the stuffed parrot, and a low gasp of surprise broke from his lips as he picked up a small pearl necklace.

"Well, that's a funny thing to drop out of a stuffed bird," he muttered to himself. "I don't know what to do about this. I suppose the only thing for me to do is to put it back inside the bird, but I wonder if Mrs. Wiggles knows anything of it. P'r'aps she does, and that's why she didn't want Ethel to touch the parrot. Well, she must be a funny old woman to hide a pearl necklace inside a stuffed bird, but I've heard that some old lady's are eccentric like that. I bet Ethel will be surprised when I tell her about it."

He peeped out into the room again, and pushed the cupboard door wider open as he saw the old lady standing directly in front of the cage containing Uncle Bones.

"And how's my 'pretty Polly' to-day!" crooned Mrs. Wiggles, bending down beside the cage until her face was close to the bars. "What a pity it is you can't talk to me like you used to."

"Hop off, old frosty face!"

It was Uncle Bones who uttered this remark, and Mrs. Wiggles almost jumped out of her elastic-sided boots with surprise.

"Good gracious me, I do believe the parrot spoke!" she gasped, turning to Ethel. "Did you hear the bird say anything, or am I dreaming?"

"No, you're balmy!" shouted Uncle Bones, remaining perfectly still on the perch.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Wiggles. "I'm sure I heard the bird speak that time!"

"Of course you did, you silly old ninny!" squawked Uncle Bones. "Did you think I was singing?"

"Well, well, well!" murmured Mrs. Wiggles, shaking her head in a puzzled fashion. "This is most amazing! I know the bird is stuffed, and yet it is talking to me. I feel I must be going potty!"

"You're not going potty, granny, you've already gone!" croaked Uncle Bones.

While this little argument was going on, both Jerry and Ethel were trembling with nervous excitement. They both realised that it was impossible to carry on the deception much longer; and Jerry had just decided to make his appearance and make a clean breast of the whole affair to Mrs. Wiggles when the old lady suddenly swung open the door of the cage and thrust her hand inside to grab Uncle Bones. Before she could do so, however, Jerry leaped out of the cupboard and gripped her by the arm.

"Just a moment, madam!" he blurted out. "I'm afraid I've got a lot of things to explain to you. I came——"

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

Mrs. Wiggles swung her arm free from Jerry's grip, and in turn caught him by the shoulder in a grip that made him wince with pain.

"Come on! Out with it, you sneaking little rat!" she snapped. "What are you doing, hiding in my flat?"

"There's been a slight accident, Mrs. Wiggles," exclaimed Ethel, hurrying forward. "I—I knocked over your parrot and damaged it slightly, and my friend here came up to see if he could mend it for me."

"But where's my parrot?" shrieked the old lady, shaking Jerry until his teeth chattered. "Where is it? Do you hear me?"

So amazed was Jerry at the old lady's extraordinary strength that for a moment he was unable to speak. And in that moment Uncle Bones acted. Seeing the door of the cage open, and Jerry in the grip of the irate old lady, the wily old bird flew out and perched itself on Mrs. Wiggles' poke bonnet.

"Oh, granny, what big eyes you've got!" shouted the parrot. "Help! Police! Call out the lifeboat crew!"

At the mention of police Mrs. Wiggles' florrid face went white to the lips, and, releasing her grip on Jerry, she made a grab at Uncle Bones, who promptly fluttered into the air, with the old lady's bonnet and wig caught in its claws.

As the bonnet and wig was whisked away, revealing a closely-cropped head of ginger hair, both Jerry and Ethel realised, with a start, that they had been duped, and that Mrs. Wiggles was a man!

For a moment Jerry was undecided what to do. But his brain was working quickly. He thought of the pearl necklace hidden in the stuffed parrot, and came to the abrupt conclusion that the man now facing him with a look of cold fury in his eyes was a thief. But before he could voice his opinion the man charged at him, his hands flung out to grab the boy by the throat.

"So you've tumbled to my little game, have you?" he snarled. "But I'm not going to let a couple of kids balk me. I'll strangle the life out of you!"

As the man came rushing blindly towards him, Jerry ducked swiftly and flung his arms round the crook's ankles, giving them a jerk upwards as his grip tightened.

Taken completely by surprise, the thief went sailing over the boy's arched back, to land with a crack on his head just in front of the cupboard where Jerry had concealed himself.

For a moment he lay there gasping, trying to get a grip on his reeling senses, and before he could recover sufficiently to show any fight, Jerry and Ethel had dragged him into the cupboard and locked the door.

Ten minutes later, when the police arrived, the chums heard an amazing story.

"You youngsters have made a good capture here," said the inspector. "This fellow is known to us as Nick Jim, one of the cleverest housebreakers in the country. He only came out of prison last week, and we lost all trace of him. Of course, we didn't know that he'd started masquerading as a woman, although we knew by his finger-prints that he'd left behind that he had committed the burglary at Mr. Slater's house. I expect there will be a reward for you both for recovering the necklace."

There certainly was! Jerry's guv'nor was so delighted that he invited Jerry and Ethel to his daughter's twenty-first birthday-party, and Uncle Bones was included, too.

The wily old bird kept the company roaring with laughter, and when the chums left the party, very late in the evening, Mr. Slater drove them home and insisted upon them accepting a five-pound note each for the great service they had rendered him.

(There will be another complete adventure of Jerry Jones, Uncle Bones, and Ethel Bright in next Saturday's JESTER. Order your copy to-day.)

The Market-Place.

"I HAVE a quaint little story to tell you to-night," said old Tom Martin, the night-watchman—"a story which, though it does not point to any special moral, will, I am sure, appeal to you for its strong romantic interest. You see, if Jim Kennedy hadn't—— But, as usual, I'm trying to begin in the middle! Let me start at the beginning and tell the yarn properly."

Tom's youthful audience were soon ready for the tale, and at once the old night-watchman began:

He stood in the crowded little market-place of the country town of Harwood. In the gutter before him stood his little three-legged collapsible table, its cane legs sagging a little under the weight of the heavy pedlar's pack with which it was laden.

In a voice that, despite its huskiness, was nevertheless cultured and refined, he spoke at length on the merits of the little packets of pills which he was striving hard to sell.

The townspeople and the busy shoppers in from the neighbouring villages paused a moment at his pitch and listened to that husky, refined voice.

"For twenty years Nature's own remedy has been incorporated within these little sugar-coated pills, my friends. I do not claim that the use of this medicine will cure all ills, from corns to lumbago. But I know—and any specialist will confirm what I say—that, taken for the complaints which I have already mentioned, this remedy will give immediate relief, and in many cases will effect a complete cure!"

There was a lot more selling talk in the same strain, and when at last the old man ceased to talk, and collected a few coppers in exchange for the little sealed packets of pills, the crowd began to melt away.

All this time Jim Kennedy had been standing on the fringe of the old man's little audience, watching him carefully, and studying his business methods rather thoughtfully.

Jim was eighteen—and a tall, well-built lad for his age. He was an orphan, and at the moment out of work. But this wasn't worrying him unduly. When one is young and untrained to any particular occupation, being out of work is no unusual thing.

Jim knew that his health and strength would soon get him a job again. He had heard that a strong youth would find it comparatively easy to get work at any of the important docks—in fact, he was passing through Harwood on his way to Liverpool for that very reason.

The sight of the old pill-pedlar, however, had given him a sudden idea, and as the crowd melted away Jim approached the old man with a friendly smile.

The pill-pedlar was sipping a glass of water preparatory to once more launching forth into a song of praise about his pills.

Jim touched him on the arm.

"Excuse me, sir," he said. "I've been watching you, and I've just had a sudden idea. I was wondering if you'd care to take a partner, sir. It seems to me that you could do with some help in this little business, and——"

Before the boy could utter another word there came a somewhat startling interruption.

A burly man wearing a choker and a cap pulled down over one eye, and carrying a heavy suitcase, suddenly thrust his way between Jim and the old pedlar, bumped his bag down on the kerbside, and proceeded to open it.

"Excuse me," said the old pill-pedlar. "This is my pitch, and there is hardly room for you here. It isn't fair for you to elbow me away like this. If you wouldn't mind waiting for another ten minutes, say, I'll be on my way and leave room for you."

The burly man stood upright from opening his case, and gave an aggressive tug at his choker.

"I'm staying!" he said shortly. "Shift me—if you can! This is my pitch now, and if I have any more o' your sauce I'll give you a flip beside the ear that'll——"

"But it isn't fair!" cut in Jim Kennedy a little heatedly. He loved fair-play, and the aggressive, bullying manner of the newcomer made his blood boil. "It isn't fair. This gentleman was here first, and——"

The bullying newcomer stepped forward and gave Jim a push which sent him staggering back into the road.

"Push off, you!" he snarled. "This ain't no business of yours. Push off, before I give you one that'll make you think a steamroller's hit you!"

"Keep your dirty paws off me!" snapped Jim, coming forward with blazing eyes. "What's wrong with you? Have you bought the whole market-place? I——"

Jim could say no more. The burly bully made a sudden swing at him with his fist, and if that blow had connected Jim would certainly have gone down flat on his back in the roadway.

But Jim Kennedy was strong and healthy—and a bit of a boxer into the bargain. With a neat side-step, he dodged the swinging blow and let loose a straight right which caught the bully fairly on the jaw.

The next moment the burly intruder was sprawling in the garbage of the gutter, with Jim standing over him with blazing eyes.

"I've met your sort before!" snapped Jim. "Old men and little boys are your favourite victims, aren't they? Get up—and hit me again if you dare!"

But that blow had taken all the fight out of the burly bully, and with as much speed as he could, and muttering the while under his breath, he seized his portmanteau and scurried away.

Jim laughed when he saw him go, and once more turned to the old pill-pedlar, who had stood by, watching the scene in amazement.

"The big bully," said Jim, with a smile. "That type needs teaching a lesson now and again. He's learned his as far as I'm concerned, anyway!"

"You're very strong," said the old pill-pedlar, looking the boy over carefully. "Now, you were saying something about a partnership. I'm afraid you won't make a fortune selling pills, my lad. A strong young man like you will find better paid work elsewhere."

"I know," said Jim. "But it's a long tramp to Liverpool, and I thought that I might earn a few shillings on the way. You see, I could carry that heavy pack for you, and you'd find that in a day or two you'd be able to teach me enough patter to enable me to help you sell the pills. If we made our way towards Liverpool, stopping at every market town on the way, I think we could earn enough to satisfy us both for the time being."

The old man remained in deep thought for some moments. Now and again he flashed a keen, searching look at the young lad, as if trying to discover if some ulterior motive was behind his suggestion.

But Jim Kennedy's face was so open and honest that he could not attribute any underhand scheme to him. He nodded his assent then.

"Very good, my lad!" he said. "If you're content to have an old man for a partner, I'll accept your offer willingly."

And so the strange partnership was formed, and not without seeing the amusing side of the venture Jim Kennedy became a pill-pedlar for the first time in his life.

The Surprise.

THE next day being a Saturday the old pill pedlar decided to stay in Harwood and to take the road for the tramp to the next market town on the Sunday.

The little market-place did not reach its busiest time until the afternoon and evening, and during the morning the old man took his young partner in hand and patiently started to teach him some of the patter of his new trade.

Jim Kennedy was enthusiastic. Moreover, he was a born salesman, and once he had mastered the selling talk which the old man carefully imparted to him he bade fair to become as good a pedlar as was the old man himself.

That evening they did very well working together. With Jim to relieve him at times the old man did not become so fatigued, and there was no doubt about it that he was more than glad to have a strong youth to carry his heavy pack when the day's work was over.

The next day the new partners set off for the long tramp to the next town.

"I'm staying here!" said the burly man aggressively. "This is my pitch now! Shift me—if you can!"

Once again the old man was glad he had come across Jim Kennedy. Jim had done quite a lot of tramping for one so young, and he had learned many a useful wrinkle, which he imparted to his partner; how to get on the right side of a surly farmer and gain permission to sleep in a dry warm hayloft, for instance; and how to get a good square meal on the road by paying for it with an hour or two of work.

And so the days passed and the pair came at last to the little market-place in the town of Stonning. It was market day and the pair looked forward to doing a good day's business. Jim had found a good pitch and was determined that to-day they should break their record for pills sold.

And then it was that that selfsame bully of Harwood reappeared.

There was no doubt of his intention the moment he was seen. He was not alone this time, but was accompanied by a couple of tough men of his own kidney, and when he sighted Jim Kennedy and the old pill-pedlar a triumphant grin came over his face.

Once or twice from his own pitch across the market place he glanced across at the little crowd round Jim Kennedy, and his face changed.

But it wasn't until the market had closed late that evening that the bully put into execution the plan which he had so obviously made.

Jim and his partner had secured a humble lodging in the centre of the town. They were on their way home, tired after a long day's effort and carrying with them a generous supper which smelled very much like fish-and-chips wrapped up in a newspaper.

Then suddenly from a dark turning the Harwood bully and his two companions appeared.

"Here they are, boys!" snarled the bully. "You tackle the young 'un! I'll attend to the old boy! Smash 'em, boys! I'll teach 'em to upset my game! Let 'em have it!"

Handicapped as he was by the heavy pack he was carrying Jim received a staggering blow between the eyes before he could get into action.

But he dropped the pack from his back and started to fight, knowing that he was in for the drubbing of his life unless he got to work against his two adversaries quickly.

As he fought the two men off his head cleared a little and he began to hand out punches which didn't improve the temper of the two men, who came at him together.

But with his back to the wall he had a desperate fight. Right and left he let loose blows; right and left his opponents dodged. Then suddenly a police whistle sounded down the street.

Jim heard the sound of running feet; the cries of men. Then something came down on the top of his head with a sickening thud and his senses left him as he dropped full-length to the pavement.

It was many hours later when Jim Kennedy opened his eyes and realised that he felt sick and ill and that his head ached horribly.

But he discovered that he was in a clean white bed, in a big and spacious room in which shaded lights shed an air of peace and quietness. A white-garbed nurse flitted softly across the foot of the bed.

Jim decided that he must be in hospital, but as his brain cleared he realised that this was no hospital but a room in some big and expensive mansion.

"Somebody must have found me and taken me in!" he muttered to himself. "I wonder how the old man got on? Hope he's all right!"

A feeling of drowsiness stole over him and he tumbled off into unconsciousness again.

When he awoke the sun was streaming in through the window and his head did not throb so badly now.

After lying still for a few moments he lifted himself on one elbow and looked around him. A gentle, husky voice bade him lay down again, and turning his head he saw his old partner.

But the pill-pedlar looked different. He was garbed now in correct morning-dress; a diamond twinkled in his neat tie—he looked a different being to the old man who had peddled pills in the market-places.

"What's up?" said Jim. "I—I don't understand! Where am I? I——"

"You are in my house, Jim," said the old man softly. "The house of your partner. You've had a nasty blow on the head, my lad—but the doctors say you'll come round quite all right. I'm glad to say the police have got our attackers—they arrived in time to save me from serious hurt. My boy—but for you I might have been killed—injured for life, at least!"

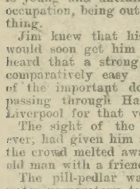
"But—but I don't understand!" said Jim. "This house—those clothes you wear! You—you were a pill-pedlar and—and this house is the house of a wealthy man—a millionaire!"

"I am a millionaire, partner!" said the old man softly. "Jimmy, I feel that I owe you something of an apology. It all arises from the fact that my long-since dead father left an eccentric will. You see, Jim, my father was Sir Maxwell Harris—the millionaire-proprietor of Harris' Health Pills. When he died and left me a fortune he stipulated that once every year I should take a pedlar's pack and peddle pills in the market-places of England even as he had done when he first started to make a fortune. Of course, the law would have upset such an eccentric condition had I insisted; the fortune could still have been mine and that clause could have been set aside. But it was my father's wish, and for years I have carried it out; for years I have peddled pills in the market-places for a fortnight at a time. This year I have met you; this year you have become my partner, Jim—and I intend to see that you become my partner in my real business! You came to my aid when I needed help—now I'm coming to your aid and intend to give you the start in life which your youth, your strength, and your ambition deserve. Now try to get some sleep and let's have you fit and well again—partner!"

"Jimmy Kennedy to-day is an active partner in the gigantic business of Harris' Health Pills," concluded old Tom Martin with a smile. "One day he will be the sole proprietor—but he does not want that day to come, for it will rob him of a partner who has been more than a father to him. Good-night, all!"

(Another complete tale told by old Tom Martin, the night-watchman, will appear in next Saturday's JESTER.).

30-11-29



The Rio Kid

If you want a lasting thrill, read the adventures of that amazing daredevil boy outlaw, The Rio Kid. Follow him along the trails of perilous adventure in this week's issue of

THE POPULAR 2d.
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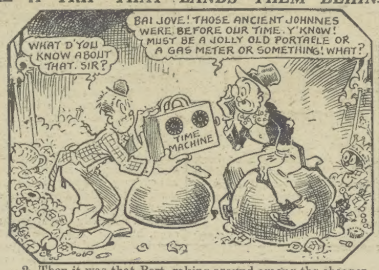
Every Tuesday. Don't miss this week's issue.

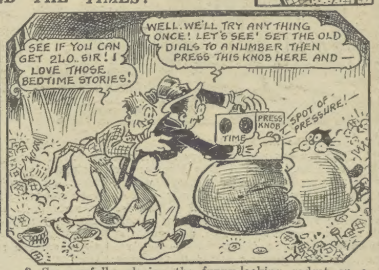
THE WORLD WIDE WANDERINGS OF BASIL & BERT

OUR LADS TAKE A TRIP THAT LANDS THEM BEHIND THE TIMES!

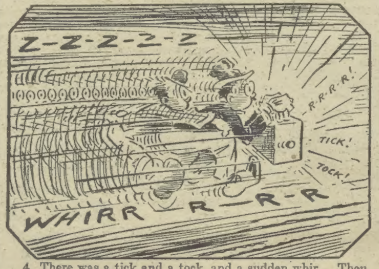
1. It won't take you very long to think up where we left our world-wanderers, Basil and Bert, last Saturday. That's right! You've got it! They had dropped upon the secret hiding-place of the long lost Aztec treasure and had loaded themselves up with a fortune, forgetting in their excitement that there was only one exit and that was out of their reach.


BAI JOVE! THOSE ANCIENT JOHNNIES WERE BEFORE OUR TIME, Y'KNOW! I MUST BE A JOLLY OLD PORTAELE OR A GAS METER OR SOMETHING! WHAT?
WHAT D'YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT, SIR?
TIME MACHINE

2. Then it was that Bert, raking around among the cheaper pile of diamonds and rubies and what-not, suddenly unearthed what looked like a portable wireless set. "Bai jove!" said Basil, taking a bit of interest in things at last. "Just fancy that! These old Aztec ancients must have known all about wireless. Let's have a go at it, Bert. It'll cheer us up!"

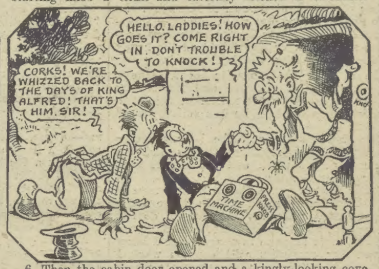

WELL, WE'LL TRY ANYTHING ONCE! LET'S SEE! SET THE OLD DIALS TO A NUMBER THEN PRESS THIS KNOB HERE AND—
SEE IF YOU CAN GET 2LO, SIR! I LOVE THOSE BEDTIME STORIES!
PRESS KNOB
SPOT OF PRESSURE!
TIME MACHINE

3. So, carefully placing the funny-looking gadget on a million pounds' worth of treasure, Basil took a long look at it. "Looks just like a wireless, doesn't it? If we can tune in Daventry we can listen to a few S.O.S.'s and a bedtime story or two!" Then, setting the dials, Basil gave the old starting knob a tickle and carefully listened in for music.

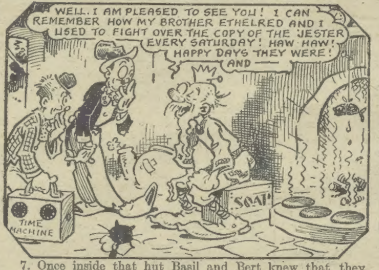


4. There was a tick and a tock and a sudden whir. Then the entire world seemed to go a trifle barmy. Away whizzed the cave and the Aztec treasure. Away whizzed Basil and Bert and their quaint little machine. They seemed to be travelling fast and yet hardly seemed to move. They didn't know it but they were whizzing down the corridors of time.

5. Then the little machine ceased to whir and whiz There was a sudden thud as nose-first the old wanderers arrived somewhere. Yes, with a wallop they both parked their faces on a little cabin door and sat down to think things over. "I've got it!" cried Basil. "It's a jolly old time-machine, Bert! We've travelled back a few years with the aid of this!"


HELLO, LADDIES! HOW GOES IT? COME RIGHT IN. DON'T TROUBLE TO KNOCK!
CORKS! WE'RE WHIZZED BACK TO THE DAYS OF KING ALFRED! THAT'S HIM, SIR!
TIME MACHINE
PRESS KNOB

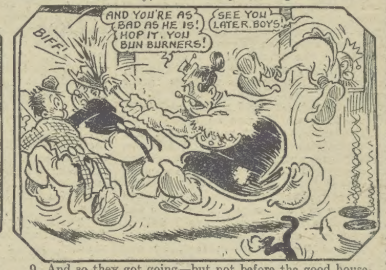
6. Then the cabin door opened and a kingly-looking cove peered out. "Corks! You're right, sir!" gasped Bert. "We've been whizzed back to the days of King Alfred! That's Alf! I recognise him by his crown!" "Come right inside!" said he. "You shouldn't have troubled to knock! Please hurry, as I'm busy minding the cakes!"


WELL, I AM PLEASED TO SEE YOU! I CAN REMEMBER HOW MY BROTHER ETHELRED AND I USED TO FIGHT OVER THE COPY OF THE JESTER EVERY SATURDAY! HAW HAW! HAPPY DAYS THEY WERE! AND——
SOAP
TIME MACHINE

7. Once inside that hut Basil and Bert knew that they really had discovered a wonderful machine. Yes, there was not the slightest doubt that they were back in the good old days of King Alfred. There was the king himself talking happily of his brother Ethelred; and there on the hearth were the very cakes that the good king was accused of burning.

HUH! I MIGHT A KNOWN IT! I CAN'T GO OUT AND DO A BIT OF SHOPPING WITHOUT YOU WASTING YOUR TIME GOSSIPING! WHAT'S THAT SMELL OF BURNING, ALFIE?
THAT'S DONE IT!

8. And ten ticks later the rest of the historical story arrived. Yes, the good housewife returned and smelled her cakes burning, and there and then did she raise a slight drop of row as you've all heard tell about. Now, Basil and Bert thought that they were intruding. After all, it wasn't up to them to stay and alter the whole course of history, was it?



9. And so they got going—but not before the good housewife managed to get them one with the same old broom that she afterwards used to such good purpose on the king. Meanwhile, Alfie had taken a header through the window—he seems to have seen the red light and done his best to dodge it. So out into the world of ancient history our lads went.

10. "Well, this is a nice place to be in anyway, sir!" said Bert. "A nice drop of forest and no game laws or restrictions. I wonder what time the curfew will ring?" "Now, now!" said Basil. "Don't talk so silly, Bert. You ought to know that the curfew won't ring for a few years yet. We're back in Saxon times, see?" Then a hunting horn sounded.

11. And the next tick a couple of territorial battalions of the invading Danish army made a rush. "Corks!" gasped Basil. "The great Danes! This is where we go to the dogs!" But the bark of the Danes was somewhat worse than their bite. They didn't kill our lads, which was a good job, for we'd have lost a couple of back-page characters there and then!

12. No! They bound Basil and Bert and forthwith led them away towards a castle on the distant horizon. "Well, we seem bound to find trouble, Bert!" said Basil. "But we have one consolation—we've still got the jolly old time-machine. By this time next Saturday we can jump a few hundred years and——" "But wait till next Saturday!"

BASIL AND BERT DO SOME MORE WANDERING THROUGH THE AGES NEXT SATURDAY.

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